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AUTHOR Suga, Toshinobu
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ABSTRACT

A brief description of the resources and services available from the 94 member libraries of the Japan Medical Library Association (JMLA) is followed by a discussion of the need for closer ties with the medical library associations of other Southeast Asian countries. Contacts described include participation in workshops held by the Southeast Asian Medical Information Center (SEAMIC), a department of the International Medical Foundation of Japan; possible contacts suggested include attendance at national association meetings in other countries. The paper concludes with a brief review of some of the barriers to the development of a network of medical libraries in the region, and a brief statement of JMLA's annual statistics for 1979 is appended. (CHC)

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REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT OF MEDICAL INFORMATION SERVICE

By

Toshinobu SUGA

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REGIONAL COOPERATION
FOR
DEVELOPMENT OF MEDICAL INFORMATION SERVICE

(By Toshinobu Suga)

Our Japan Medical Library Association (JMLA) is an organization of special libraries of medical information founded in 1927. At first it had only four participants as its members, but now after half a century, it commands as many as ninety-four libraries and is the most powerful association of special libraries in Japan. And yet when we compare the size, staff, and budget of these member libraries with those in Europe and America, we cannot but feel their scantiness. In fact we have very limited titles of periodicals in purchase which are indispensable to medical libraries, so we have to depend on such foreign libraries for necessary copies as the National Library of Medicine in America, the British Library Lending Division in England and so on. Though small in size as compared with those of Europe and America, the member organizations of the association have a stronger cooperation than any other library group has in Japan, and are doing their best for the service of medical information. It owes to the help offered by American and other foreign medical libraries after World War II that the association could grow into the today's powerful organization. Especially the supply of missing numbers of medical periodicals by American medical libraries, free service of copy of medical literature by the NLM, and training of medical librarians in America were most valuable. And again, if it had not been for help given by American noted librarians who kindly visited Japan to train Japanese medical librarians, our association could not be what it is. The present state

of Japanese medical libraries is as follows. Some member libraries offer literature reference, which amounts to 24,899 in 1978. But the number of associated libraries which introduced the terminal apparatus of the MEDLARS system is only 30 out of 94 libraries, so the online literature retrieval service is still a matter of future in Japan.

The Japan Medical Library Association has largely depended on America and Europe, so that in spite of being a member of Asian countries, it has almost no contact with medical libraries in Asian, specially Southeast Asian countries. Consequently its knowledge about the state of the libraries in these countries is very limited. As late as a few years ago it started communication with the Korean Medical Library Association and sends a few librarians to the annual general meeting and vice versa. However the number of attendants is very few as compared with that of Japanese librarians at the general meeting of MLA in America. It may be said that medical library associations in Asian and Southeast Asia have little mutual contact with each other. Such being the case, Japan Medical Library Association never held any significant intercourse with other Asian medical libraries. In 1973 the Southeast Asian Medical Information Center(SEAMIC), a department of the International Medical Foundation of Japan held the first workshop in Tokyo. The workshop had two sections and one of them was for Health Documentation which is a subgroup of medical libraries. The participant countries in the first workshop are Khmer, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and Japan. The meeting enabled Japanese librarians to know about the medical libraries in Southeast Asian countries for the first time. The second workshop was opened in Manila in 1975, the third in Singapore in 1976, the fourth in Bangkok in 1977, and the fifth again in Manila in 1978. Please look at the copies I have prepared for you of the recommendation made at the five workshops. Through these workshops Japanese medical librarians were given opportunities

to exchange views with them. But since the fifth meeting, doctors seem to have taken a chief role in the SEAMIC, and the Health Documentation section became rather sluggish, though requests for medical literature are smoothly received in Japan as was decided at the second workshop. The number of application for copy the SEAMIC received from medical libraries in Southeast Asian countries in a year from April in 1979 to March in 1980 amounts to 5,155. But as the SEAMIC does not possess its own library, received requests are sent round to the associated medical libraries of the Japan Medical Library Association, and then sent back to the requesting libraries through the SEAMIC. Among the articles which were recommended as particularly urgent measures to take, there are training of inexperienced medical librarians, and making guide line for medical and health librarians in Southeast Asia. But they have not realized yet. I am afraid other articles are also delayed in realization. As a new project the SEAMIC started service of MEDLARS in cooperation with the Japan Information Center of Science and Technology in August in 1979. The number of application received from August in 1979 to March in 1980 is 22. Similarly to the case of copy request, the SEAMIC passed them round to the member libraries of the JMLA, and sent them back to the requesting libraries. As I explained above, Japanes medical libraries have the SEAMIC as a mediator to the Southeast Asian countries; that is, the contact between the libraries is not direct. Moreover the Japan Medical Library Association does not take more part in the workshops of the SEAMIC than sending a few members to the Health Documentation section. The association has never attended meetings of Southeast Asian medical libraries. However, meetings by national libraries in Asia and Southeast Asia are frequently opened since 1957. Especially the Congress of Southeast Asian Librarians discussed at every meeting from the first to the fourth, organization of regional or national libraries and information service. But perhaps they had few meetings centering on medical information itself. The Japanese medical

libraries have had a lot of opportunities to have contact with European and American libraries, but very few with Asian countries.

Why is the distance in information so wide and far when we are so near geographically ? Should we not have a meeting at least once in a few years if not every year ? We should think what measures to take to realize such regular meetings. If every country has its own association of medical libraries, it will be great help to exchanging information as well as to building up a network of medical libraries. The SEAMIC issued the "Directory of Medical Periodicals" in March in 1980, so we can grasp the outline of medical periodicals published in Southeast Asia. Again in cooperation with Southeast Asian librarians, some members of the Japan Medical Library Association are going to publish this month the "Union List of Medical Periodicals Published in the Southeast Asian Countries". Such efforts will conduce to regional cooperation. But if there are countries that will not participate such small projects as planned with personal relation, and not with international relation, we will have a lot of problems to solve in advance before actualization of regional cooperation. Our Japan Medical Library Association has a very scanty finance, but taking this general meeting of IFLA in Manila as opportunity, we are willing to make efforts for development of medical information service in cooperation with Asian and Southeast Asian medical librarians.

At the International Symposium on National Planning for Library Service Network, which was held in Tokyo in 1978, Director Quiason of the National Library of the Philippines pointed the problem of variety and complexity of the region which was a barrier to building up a network of libraries in Southeast Asia. I would like to conclude my speech with proposition that we all medical librarians first have the aim to remove the barrier and in order to achieve it, exchange views freely. It will be a sure step to develop medical information.

ANNUAL STATISTICS OF JAPAN MEDICAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

- 1979 -

1.	NUMBER OF LIBRARIES	63	
2.	NUMBER OF PROFESSIONAL STAFF		AVERAGE
		945	10.2
	MEN	387	4.3
	WOMEN	558	6.0
3.	NUMBER OF NON PROFESSIONAL STAFF	1.636	12.0 (54)
4.	NUMBER OF VOLUMES	7.239.667	85.172
	MONOGRAPHS	4.009.371	47.169
	JOURNALS	3.230.296	38.003
5.	NUMBER OF JOURNAL TITLES	200.364	2.178
	FOREIGN	91.481	994
	JAPANESE	108.883	1.184
6.	NUMBER OF CURRENT JOURNALS	120.979	1.315
	FOREIGN	54.162	588
	JAPANESE	66.855	727
7.	BUDGET (UNIT: THOUSAND YEN)		
		5.438.028	84.969
	MAXIMUM	195.855	
	MINIMUM	9.727	
8	INTER-LIBRARY LOAN		
	NUMBER OF ITEMS OF LOANED	310.787	
	ORIGINAL MATERIALS	4.020	64 (63)
	PHOTOCOPYING	303.224	3.332 (91)
	FROM ABROAD	3.543	332 (11)
	NUMBER OF ITEMS BORROWED	170.063	
	ORIGINAL MATERIALS	2.089	33 (63)
	PHOTOCOPYING	162.242	1.783 (91)
	OVERSEAS	5.732	69)83)